

LESSON 21 • JANUARY 21

“I am determined to see things differently.”

Practice instructions

Exercise: Five times, for one full minute each.

- Repeat the idea.
- Then close your eyes and search your mind carefully for any situation at any time that arouses anger in you, no matter how mild. Hold each one in mind and say, “*I am determined to see [specify person or situation] differently.*” Give “little” and “big” thoughts of anger the same attention. Be very specific, even to the point of naming specific attributes in specific people that anger you: “*I am determined to see [specify the attribute] in [name of person] differently.*”

Remarks: In this practice, we are meant to avoid the fallacy that the degree of our anger matters. This fallacy takes two forms. The first is thinking that tiny bits of anger—for instance, mild irritation—are too small to bother including in the exercise. The second is emphasizing certain “obvious” sources of anger, which implies that in these particular cases our anger is truly justified. The truth is that *all* anger is maximal and *none* of it is justified.

A second fallacy is mentioned as well. This is the belief that our anger is confined to a particular personality trait in someone: “I basically love Jim. I am not angry at him across the board, just at this one particularly annoying trait of his.” This lesson is implying that our anger toward this person is *not* safely confined in this way; it *is* across the board. With this fallacy, rather than not letting it influence our practice (as with the previous fallacy), we are supposed to *use* it in our practice. We are supposed to apply the idea specifically to that trait (see 5:4).

Response to temptation: Whenever a situation arouses anger.

Repeat the idea, specifying the perceived source of the anger: “*I am determined to see [specify person or situation] differently.*”

Commentary

In this lesson we apply the idea of being determined to see to specific situations that arouse anger, with an emphasis on seeing these situations differently. The meaning of these exercises in connection with transforming our perceptions is quite obvious.

One thought from this lesson is particularly striking. It is a thought that makes more and more sense to me the longer I work with the Course, studying the Text and practicing the mental disciplines it teaches us: “You will become increasingly aware that a slight twinge of annoyance is nothing but a veil drawn over intense fury” (2:5).

The very first “miracle principle” presented in Chapter 1 of the Text says, “There is no order of difficulty in miracles” (T-1.I.1:1). The idea expressed in this lesson closely parallels that concept. There is no order of severity in anger, either; a slight twinge of annoyance is the same as intense fury, and in fact *is* disguised rage. All forms of anger stem from the same source.

Some schools of psychology have long maintained that everyone carries around a deeply suppressed, primal anger. It may be tempered by a veneer of civilization, but underneath, in the subconscious, lies a violent fury. Many have attributed this to our animalistic origins in evolution, but the Course sees the anger in a metaphysical sense. Within us we carry a blinding anger at ourselves because we believe we have attacked reality and succeeded; we have somehow managed to separate ourselves from God and have destroyed the unity of Heaven. We think that

in a childish fit of pique over not receiving special treatment and special love, we have ruined our own home and can never go back.

We are enraged at ourselves, but, unable to endure the guilt of our own self-hatred, we broadcast our rage outward and deflect our anger onto other objects we believe to be separate from ourselves. The term used for this displacement of anger is “projection.” The ego within us is constantly “cruising,” looking for situations onto which anger can be projected with seeming justification, in order to convince our minds that the cause of the anger is without, and not within.

Every flash of anger, ranging from mild irritation up to rage, is a symptom of this same, deep, primal self-hatred, projected onto the world. They are all the same thing. This is why the Course is advising us not to believe that some forms of attack are more justified than others, and not to overlook the “little” thoughts of anger. By making no distinction between “degrees” of anger we are helping ourselves learn that they are, in reality, all the same, and all equally unjustified.